(b) whether India proposes to tap this unrecoverable coal reserve through underground coal gasification process which is already in operation at Australia's Chichilla Project;

(c) whether India has the requisite technical expertise to build coal gasification plants; and

(d) if not, whether India is scouting for overseas technology/expertise for such projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO) : (a) A total of about 248 billion tonnes of coal resources have been estimated by Geological Survey of India (as on 1.1.05). Out of these about 93 billion tonnes are in 'Proved' category for which project planning and mining has been done/may be done and the balance about 155 billion tonnes (1,55,000 million tonnes are in 'Indicated' and 'Inferred' categories). The reserves in 'Indicated and' 'Inferred' categories may be considered for project planning and mining after they are brought to 'Proved' category through detailed exploration. The viability of mining of coal resources however, depends on the economics and the state of technology. With advanced technology and better economics more and more resources may be mined.

(b) Coal India Limited has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Oil & Natural gas Corporation (ONGC) for establishing a pilot project in order to establish the technology of Underground Coal Gasification (UCG). Commercial scale venture to tap unrecoverable coal reserves through UCG will be taken up only when the pilot plant does lead to successful trial.

(c) and (d) India does not have requisite technical expertise to take up underground coal gasification projects. The joint venture of CIL and ONGC is taking the help of Stoichinsky Institute of Mining, Russia who is considered to be pioneer in establishing this technology.

Supply of coal to Kothagudem Power Project

1654. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any request from the Government of Andhra Pradesh has been received for supply of coal to the proposed Kothagudem Thermal Power Project Stage-VI;

(b) if so, when;

(c) whether SCCL is going to open cast mines at Sattupally in Khamman District of Andhra Pradesh;

(d) if so, whether Government would instruct SCCL to supply coal to Kothagudem Thermal Power Project; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government (Central Electricity Authority) has received a request from Andhra Pradesh Power Generation Corporation Limited on 10.9.2004 for Long-term coal linkage to the tune of 2.2 million tonnes per annum in respect of Kothagudem TPS Stage-VI.

(c) to (e) While SCCL has expressed its inability to supply coal to Kothagudem Thermal Power Project Stage-VI, Coal India Limited has agreed to provide coal to this unit.

Specifications for coal mines

1655. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have issued any specifications, to govern extraction, production and transportation of coal from coal mines;

(b) if so, whether the State Government or Non-Government agencies undertaking the mining operations, are following the same;

(c) if so, the reasons behind mishaps happening so frequently in our country; and

(d) the number of such mishaps happened during 2004 and the number of persons died in these mishaps?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO) : (a) and (b) Mining of coal in India is broadly governed by the Mines Act 1952, the Mines & Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act 1957, the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act 1973, the Mineral Concession Rules 1960 and the Colliery Control Order, 2000. All agencies are legally bound to carry on mining activities as per the provisions of these statutes.

(c) and (d) The coal companies, in order to prevent mishaps and to improve the status of safety in mines, lay thrust on training of workmen, supervisors and managers. This also leads to increase in safety awareness amongst the workforce. The Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS), under the Ministry of Labour, is the statutory body for enforcement of safety statutes in mines in the country. Prompt action is taken by the coal companies to rectify the deficiencies observed by DGMS officers. About 88 accidents have taken place in the coal mines in the country in 2004 resulting in 97 fatalities.